

Ecommerce Insider

Fall
20
22

Plus Ron Tite on acceleration // MEC on sustainable heights // Thomas Benjoe on collaboration

Spirit of reinvention

Learn how Reitmans built on its past to thrive into the future





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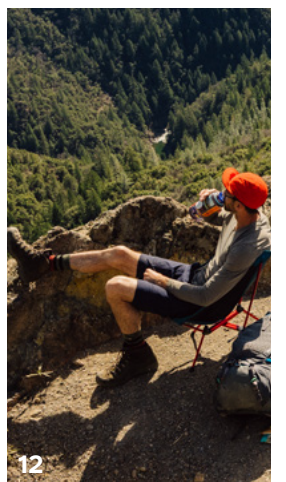
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Canada Post is helping to build a stronger, more sustainable Canada by delivering more for businesses.



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LETTER FROM CEO

Journeying forward, together



Change is inevitable – but nobody expected this.

We now have a greater understanding of the degree of change that has occurred over the last two years – the needs and expectations of Canadian online shoppers have changed dramatically. What they want, where they buy it, when they want it and who delivers it are among a near endless list of make-or-break decisions on their new customer journey.

It has been a challenge to adapt.

We, too, have seen and experienced this dramatic shift. While you adjust to these ever-changing demands in an increasingly competitive market, Canada Post is focused on transforming alongside you and making important investments to help.

To better serve Canadians and Canadian businesses, we have a plan anchored in investing in our operations, our products, our people and our planet. We're innovating by expanding capacity to support ecommerce growth; reducing our collective environmental impact; better supporting

traditionally underserved Indigenous and remote regions; and championing equity, diversity and inclusion in our workplaces and communities.

Like us, some of Canada's most recognizable brands are journeying forward as well.

In this issue of *Ecommerce Insider*, we celebrate the spirit of reinvention found among Canadian retailers. We are proud to share their stories of purpose and passion, of challenge and triumph.

As your business moves forward, know that we, as an extension of your brand, are committed to supporting businesses like yours in every corner of the country. There's no question the last two years have changed this country – and as Canada continues to evolve, so will Canada Post. It's a journey we'll take together as partners. And we're just getting started.

Doug Ettinger
President and CEO



Historic opportunities

Reitmans nods to its iconic Canadian roots as a spirit of reinvention pushes its customer experience into the future.

Deep roots grow a lot of expectations over time – that holds especially true for one of the nation’s oldest retailers.

“There will always be certain customer expectations because of who we are, how long we have been around, and the relationships we have built with families across several generations,” said Lisa Reitman, Vice-president, Customer Experience, with Reitmans Canada. “That’s not a bad thing – it’s a great thing, actually. But it means we have to meet those expectations in everything we do.”

Building on its history

Reitmans was founded in 1926 by Herman and Sarah Reitman. Over the last century, the publicly owned, family-controlled business has evolved from a single women’s clothing store on Boulevard St. Laurent in Montreal into one of Canada’s largest women’s specialty retailers.

Today, Reitmans Canada Limited – known as RCL among its team – operates three different brands: Reitmans, Penningtons, and RW&CO, serving the clothing needs of Canadians with more than 400 stores and across ecommerce channels.

That rich history should not be construed as stuffy complacency, however, as the classically conservative company has embraced constant reinvention of itself, its products, and its processes, always striving to find a connection between its authentic core and customers.

As one might guess, many of those changes have involved a move into digital over the last decade.

For Reitmans, ecommerce sales were strong (and growing) before the COVID-19 pandemic, although the company rarely publicly celebrated its digital successes, going so far as to report sales figures as a combined number. But behind the silence was a company innovating. Take its ship-from-store solution, initially launched as a fast, sustainable, and convenient way to fulfil customer orders, later, it became a critical survival tool for a pandemic.

“We’ve always wanted to encourage our customers to become more omni-focused and shop both online or in-store. The pandemic sort of propelled them to be that,” Reitman said. “Without that ecom foundation in place, I don’t know what would have happened to us.”



Changing with the customer

When you've been in business this long, you don't panic about customers becoming more confident with their preferences. It happens all the time. But while the sophistication of today's shopper wasn't created by the pandemic, Reitman said, its arrival was certainly accelerated by it.

For example, the rise of the purpose-driven shopper is a consideration for all retailers, but that kind of focus seems to be an advantage for a legacy brand already with a long record of community connections.

"A company's values. Its commitment to the community. Its commitment to the environment. Whatever it may be. People today don't shop at places that they don't like or that don't stand for their beliefs," Reitman said. "If you don't like the company, don't like what it stands for, people are turned off."

"People are aware. Customers have high expectations when it comes to social responsibility, workers' rights, diversity and inclusion, the environment. So, we continue to make every effort to stay ahead of the curve. Social responsibility is critical; it's table stakes."

For Reitmans, that kind of transparent relationship with the customer is part of a larger push.

"Customer service is beyond providing the lowest price or offering a price adjustment," Reitman said. "It's the understanding that customers feel our products are priced fairly and well-designed, that the quality and fit are right, that they were made in good working conditions. All of these factors make people feel good."

"You can never compete solely on price – there's always going to be a lower price somewhere. So, what do we strive to stand for? A good value product that offers consistent fit for all sizes and body types. A superior online and in-store experience that is convenient and effortless. An emotional connection for our customers that inspires and empowers them."

Reitman saw that emotional connection play out in recent years, as the company successfully navigated both a global pandemic and creditor protection. Personal messages from shoppers celebrated what the stores meant to their families and their communities, and encouraged the company to keep moving forward and survive.

It was all so unexpected, appreciated, and inspiring, Reitman said. "These last few years have taught us that human connection is so desired and was missed for so long."



Surviving for the next century

In order to keep one's eyes on the future, Reitman has found it helps to open their ears. Part of creating and improving customer experience over the long haul is figuring out exactly what customers want – no brand can invest in everything.

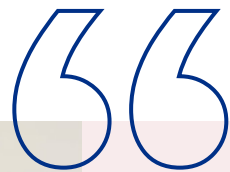
Reitmans counts on its customers to help them prioritize. That's what sparked the company to think more about the omni experience, enhance online and in-store experiences, even develop a new online marketplace. These were all modern changes aligned with historic expectations of customer service from the company.

"Our loyal fans, our loyal customers push us to do well. They propel us to make things as simple and as good as possible," Reitman said. "We do surveys. We have data. We have insights. We do pre-purchase surveys, post-purchase surveys. We're always asking our customers questions about what they want and don't want, or how they feel about various aspects of our business."

"It's great to have all this information, but for it to matter, you actually have to take what they're telling you and do something with it. Otherwise, there's no point in asking. Listen to your customer. Listen to what they're telling you."

reitmanscanadalimited.com

Discover how Reitmans looks to expand its customer experience with the launch of RCL Market at canadapost.ca/ReitmansMarket.



People are aware. Customers have high expectations when it comes to social responsibility, workers' rights, diversity and inclusion, the environment. So, we continue to make every effort to stay ahead of the curve. Social responsibility is critical; it's table stakes.

– Lisa Reitman, Vice-president, Customer Experience, Reitmans



Key Takeaways

01

Legacy brands that embrace a spirit of continuous reinvention will always be relevant to shoppers.

02

Shoppers will continue to evolve, so leading companies will embrace the data that points in the right direction.

03

Listen to customers, discover what they need, and act on that information.



It's time for businesses to accelerate.

— Ron Tite, Founder and Chief Creative Officer, Church+State



EXPERT INSIGHT

Racing to victory

Leaders can accelerate more than growth as they emerge from a pandemic curve

By Ron Tite

Let's talk acceleration – but perhaps not in the way you think.

Hop into the race car with me. Pick any car, from stock to Formula 1, and any course, from Circuit Gilles Villeneuve to Mission Raceway Park, and let's get rolling.

When it comes to motor sports, it's easy to win in the straightaway. Ridiculously easy. Lock your arms, put the pedal to the metal and, well, that's it. There's not a ton of skill in the straightaway. Whoever built the best car, whoever prepared for the race best probably has the best shot at winning.

But champions know races are not won in the straightaway. Instead, races are won in two places: In the pits. And in the corners.

The pits are all about team. Do you have the right people who are inspired and empowered to do the job that you need them to do when the pressure is on?

Most successful businesses have that. If not, they're stalled in the garage before the race starts.

The corners are different, however.

The corners are all on the driver. How a driver handles corners often determines the race.

As they enter the corner, great drivers slow the car down until they get control. They go from a state of chaos to a state of composure. The challenge is ensuring that the composure doesn't turn into complacency. Great drivers know that to win the race you need to accelerate in the middle of the

curve so that by the time you hit the straightaway again you do so with great momentum and great speed that you lap everybody else that waited.

In your case, corners can determine and define your career, too.

In its lifetime, your business will go through a ton of corners like recessions, pandemics, supply chain issues, political instability and more. Do you sit on your hands and wait it out? No. You gain control and ensure your composure doesn't lead to complacency by accelerating in the middle of the curve.

We're nearing the end of one curve.

It's time for businesses to accelerate. Put the pedal to the metal and go full-speed ahead. The key word there is "ahead." This isn't about going back to recovery. This is about going forward to reinvention and growth: Personal growth. Departmental growth. Company growth. Community growth. When leaders commit to their own growth, organizational growth follows.

IMHO, leadership is taking specific actions based on the information you have to improve the lives of the people around you. This is a massive opportunity for those who realize that it's a privilege to be in a seat of leadership. It's a responsibility to commit to personal growth. And it's a reward to experience people sharing in that growth.

Nobody should be waiting for the corner to end to get to work. Let's go.

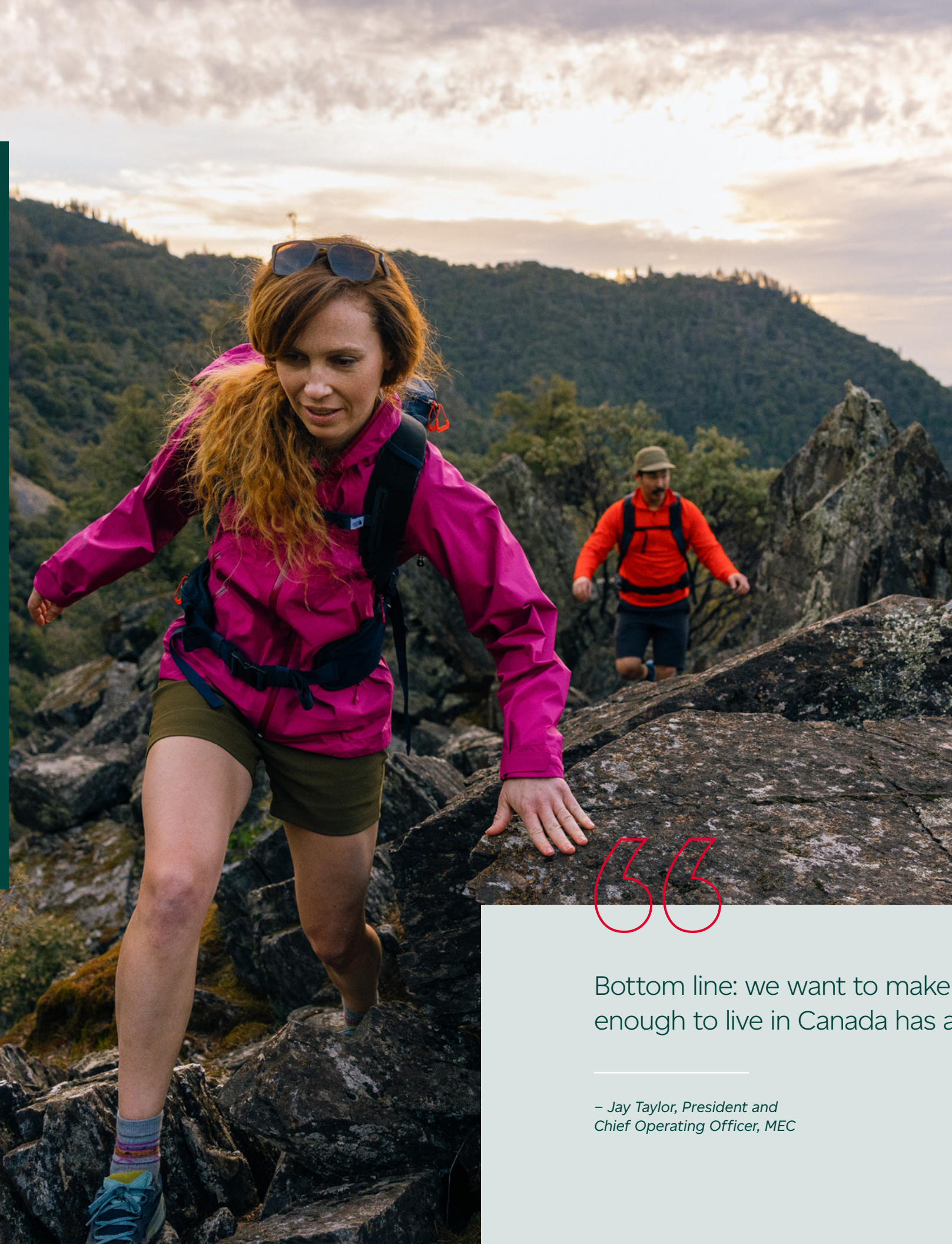
Ron Tite, a best-selling author, speaker and entrepreneur, is the founder of Church+State, host and executive producer of the hit podcast The Coup, and publisher of the satirical This is That: Travel Guide to Canada. His most recent book is Think Do Say: How to seize attention and build trust in a busy, busy world.

Ain't no mountain high enough

MEC scales new heights through a pandemic to put sustainability back on top

Nobody said the path to sustainability would be a straight line.

Just ask Jay Taylor. As President and Chief Operating Officer, Mountain Equipment Company (MEC), he has helped the iconic Canadian outdoors brand find secure footing post-pandemic and begin to scale even greater heights as a corporate leader in sustainability.



On solid foundations

Founded in 1971 by members of the University of British Columbia Varsity Outdoor Club, Mountain Equipment Company – formally known as Mountain Equipment Co-op – has been helping Canadians embrace the outdoors for the last half century. By inspiring and educating others on how to live active, outdoor lives, MEC and its members elevated the conversation on environmental, social and economic sustainability.

“Sustainability is at our heart. This is our brand – has been since the beginning,” said Christian Gehres, VP Supply Chain & Operations Transformation. “Our members have an emotional connection to it.”

That connection was put to the test in recent years, as mounting financial troubles threatened to capsize MEC. In October 2020, the company was sold to Kingswood Capital Management. The new team went to work bolstering the brand, rebuilding its retail operations and processes, and re-establishing relationships from the ground up – a monumental task undertaken during a raging global pandemic.

During that time, survival was the primary focus, Taylor said.

“We were often forced out of our comfort zone,” he said. “Like every retailer, during the pandemic we were presented with tough decisions and had to make trade-offs. Some of the things that were necessary to MEC staying in business had environmental impacts.”

For example, the company normally opts to move product from Asia by sea, a far more sustainable (and economical) option to air. But with ports compromised, air at times became the company’s only option.



Bottom line: we want to make sure everybody who’s fortunate enough to live in Canada has access to the outdoors.

– Jay Taylor, President and Chief Operating Officer, MEC



Decisions like those came fast, but there were several areas that remained critical for the company to support.

“During the pandemic, we focused on upholding human rights in our supply chain and furthering our ambitious product sustainability goals, which are our biggest impacts as a brand. These have always been and always will be non-negotiables for MEC.”

The brand survived and has emerged stronger than it has been in ages. Now, it is time to return to what has mattered most to the brand since the beginning, a return to what its members have come to expect.

“The transition wasn’t easy at times, but we’ve finally made it,” Gehres said. “We’ve strengthened our commitment to sustainability. Meanwhile community events, clinics, rentals – all the stuff that had to be put on hold during the pandemic, it’s all coming back.”

Beyond basic commitments

MEC views sustainability as a commitment to the environment, and having a positive impact on its supply chain and the communities in which we work and play.

With the business secured, the environmental focus is translating into concrete actions across the brand. With its own label, for instance, the company carries considerable influence in the industry, reflected in its sustainability goals for MEC Label product, including:

- 100% responsibly sourced wool for MEC Label products by 2025. The company has already achieved 100% use of responsible down, preferred lyocell and organic cotton
- 50% of polyester products and 30% of nylon products made from recycled content by 2023
- 100% of plastic mailer bags for online orders eliminated by 2023

Additionally, the brand is restarting community programs once again.

To do that, MEC donated \$1 million in 2021 to its Outdoor Impact partners, a collection of outdoors-focused non-profit organizations including groups like Avalanche Canada, Spirit North, and the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society. The company is continuing to invest heavily in its Outdoor Impact program in 2022, with more initiatives launching that aim to protect our wild spaces and increase equity in the outdoors.

“We have a responsibility to make sure that we get out there and we support the outdoor community. It’s one of the things that makes up our secret sauce,” Taylor said. “From frontline staff to the management team, we all believe wholeheartedly that investments like these are the right place to put our resources. That’s meaningful to our members who shop with us, as well. Believe me, they are hyper-vigilant about holding us to account.”

“Bottom line: we want to make sure everybody who’s fortunate enough to live in Canada has access to the outdoors.”

The company throws a big tent over the Canadian outdoors, viewing it as a welcoming space for all Canadians, from recent immigrants, to marginalized groups, to anyone who needs support trying something new. The company hosts numerous events and groups at its stores to educate and inspire anyone ready to embrace an outdoors lifestyle.

It’s all part of the company’s return to sustainable form and vision for a sustainable future.

“The outdoors is part of the fabric of living in Canada,” Gehres said. “It should be for all to enjoy.”

mec.ca



Explore how MEC promotes an outdoors lifestyle through both online and in-store experiences at canadapost.ca/MECExperience.



Key Takeaways

01

Understanding what your brand stands for can provide guidance in difficult times.

02

As a strategy, sustainability requires a company-wide commitment to the environment, the business and the community.

03

Shoppers are watching to see if your words match your actions when it comes to sustainability.

Moving beyond box-checking

Indigenous engagement must be rooted in collaboration and belonging in order to deliver meaningful long-term success

By Thomas Benjoe

We knew not everyone would want to come along on this journey, but we also knew that those who did would be invested for the long run – and those are the kind of partners any organization needs for success.

In 2010, FHQ Developments was founded by the 11-member First Nations communities of File Hills Qu'Appelle Tribal Council, which represents more than 16,000 First Nations citizens and 435,000 acres of reserve lands in Treaty 4 territory (encompassing much of southern Saskatchewan).

If you don't have Indigenous engagement as part of your long-term strategy, you're not going to be successful.

– Thomas Benjoe, President and CEO of FHQ Developments



Photo by Tenille K. Campbell

Our organization's primary purpose centres on the long-term economic independence and prosperity of our partners and citizens by developing profitable business ventures, economic development opportunities, and advancing employment and livelihood for our Nations and citizens in a manner consistent with Nehiyaw (Cree), Dakota, Nakota, Lakota and Anishinaabe (Saulteaux) Nations teachings.

In Saskatchewan – not unlike most provinces across Canada – there have always been issues around proper participation of Indigenous businesses in the larger economy. When I stepped into the CEO role five years ago, I wanted to understand the extent of the challenge. I listened to provincial stakeholders in the private and public sectors, along with business leaders in the Indigenous community, and heard all the reasons why the status quo wasn't working.

While a number of organizations had Indigenous engagement policies, each outlined how they thought Indigenous people should be interacting with their organization. Our partnerships were quite transactional – we engaged only when there was something to do, like a major project in our territory.

That type of relationship doesn't work. I knew we could not survive chasing the next big project, then the next big project and so on. We needed something that outlived the moment and looked at a more sustainable future.

As an organization, we asked ourselves tough questions about what we wanted from these relationships. We rewrote policy, refocused our efforts and approached these agreements in a whole new way.

Today, FHQ Developments is building stronger business partnerships; investing in sustainable opportunities that provide equity ownership in key sectors; supporting and promoting community economic development; and providing employment services to First Nations job seekers and employers. We are clear and confident in what we want from our partnerships.

Change isn't easy. We lost some partners, but ended up with new ones more invested in our larger goals. Instead of just checking a box and saying, 'Oh, we have Indigenous ownership,' our partners are digging deeper, exploring how they're building capacity in the company and our community.

Truly, there's no excuse for any organization not to be working with First Nations. If you don't have Indigenous engagement as part of your long-term strategy, you're not going to be successful.

Both sides need to start building sustainable relationships now.

For Indigenous organizations, that means knowing what you want and having the confidence in your vision to make things happen. That vision has to have substance – it can't just be 'do good, feel good' stuff. It can't be just checking a box. It requires time, resources and patience to develop.

For non-Indigenous organizations, it's important that you don't just assume you know what it is we want as Indigenous organizations. I often use this analogy when we speak about diversity, equity and inclusion.

Diversity is being invited to the dance. That's our organizations being invited to a meeting or a conference. We're present.

Equity is being asked to dance. That means somebody acknowledging your presence, asking your opinion, making you part of the room and you enjoying being a part of it.

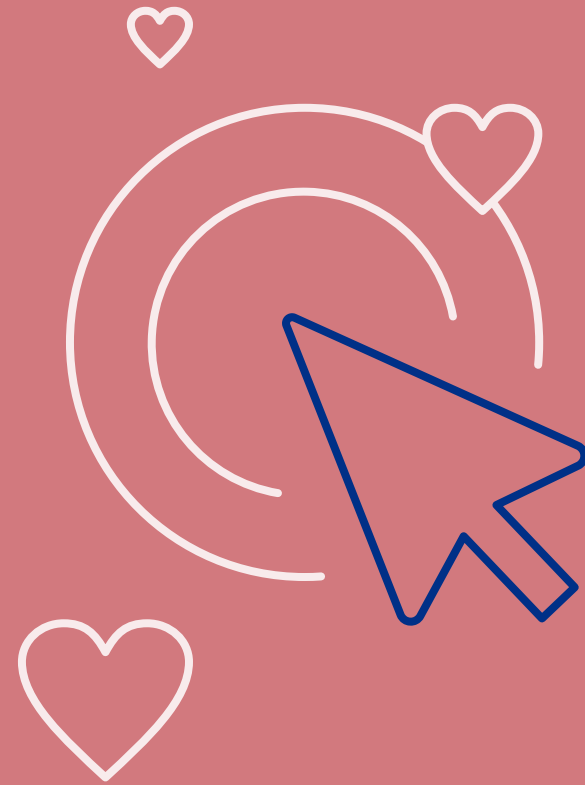
Inclusion is that person who asked you to dance, asking you to lead. This is where we are today. Organizations are creating Indigenous advisory committees or roles for Indigenous people to have their voice heard. There are commitments being made to Indigenous engagement.

The fourth piece is belonging. That means I own the dance with you – who's going to be invited, what the theme and rules are, how the dance is going to be managed. That's Indigenous people having an equity stake, having the ability to speak from a board level, setting policy and processes, having a sense of ownership. That's where we need to get to.

We need that sense of belonging – and the only way we're going to achieve it is through appropriate respect and working together. Relationships and understanding are a recipe for our success.

Thomas Benjoe, a member of the Muscowpetung First Nation, serves as President and CEO of FHQ Developments.

Put your brand to the loyalty test



We all know cultivating loyalty is a challenge.

Top retailers are adapting their loyalty strategies to address an ever-changing, unpredictable market, with shifting consumer preferences and expectations. That's no easy task, as more than three-quarters of shoppers are willing to abandon old favourite brands in favour of new options if they can't get what they want, when they want it.

Wondering if you're providing a customer experience worthy of loyalty? The data speaks to a few areas you may want to consider.

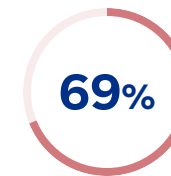
Compare and contrast

Canadian consumers are feeling the pressure of inflation-driven price increases and product supply chain disruption. This has caused some shoppers to opt for cost savings over brand loyalty. Most Canadians start their online purchase journeys by searching the web, which suggests they don't have a particular retailer in mind and they're open to inspiration and offers from new brands.



LOYALTY TIP: Optimize your searchability so when shoppers are looking for the products you offer, you arrive at the top of the list. Enable customer reviews for new shoppers who might discover you for the first time and help them feel confident in your brand and product.

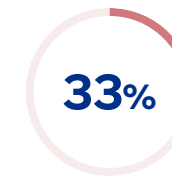
Why do shoppers turn to search engines?



Wanted to see what is available.



Wanted to compare prices.



Didn't have a particular retailer/brand in mind.

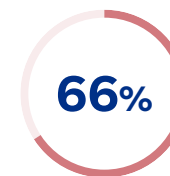
Focusing on more than price

Canadian consumers across all generations now expect digital-first experiences, thus placing higher demands on retailers to provide a top-shelf customer experience from their website and online checkout to delivery and returns.

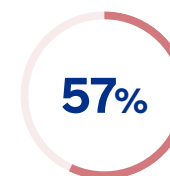


LOYALTY TIP: Make good use of technology and personalization to be smarter and more efficient. Experiences rooted in relationship building and centred on brand values will increase customer lifetime value.

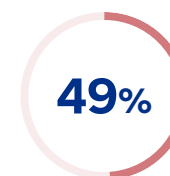
Shoppers reward retailers who:



Consistently meet expectations.



Provide exceptional customer service.



Offer a convenient and flexible delivery experience.

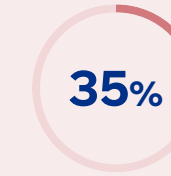
Social responsibility matters

Sustainability. Equity. Diversity and inclusion. The issues dominating global headlines are also front of mind for shoppers. Nearly two-thirds of Canadian online shoppers (65%) are looking inwards, examining their core values and looking to align them with the brands they frequent.

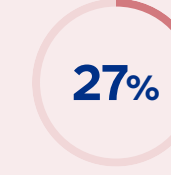


LOYALTY TIP: Be transparent about your purpose and mission, communicate its importance clearly, then live it for people to see. Authentic brands resonate more powerfully with shoppers.

Shoppers want to know if retailers:



Treat their employees well.



Protect the environment.



Carry sustainably and ethically sourced products.



Are genuinely committed to doing the right thing.

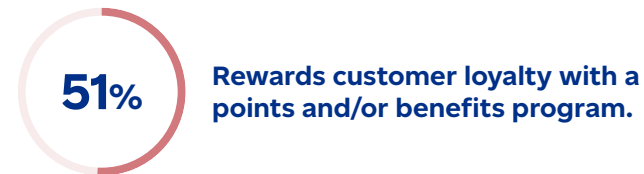


Seeking tangible value

Canadians value benefits and rewards and perceive these factors as a compelling reason to shop with brands more frequently. It doesn't need to be a massive reward, but simply something that shows an appreciation for their business and encourages them to shop again.



Shoppers would be more likely to buy from a retailer that:



LOYALTY TIP: Your loyalty program is a key part of your customer experience. It's an opportunity to capture rich insights, track spend and shopping trends, and assign reward points and cost-saving benefits to your most frequent customers. Pay close attention to your customer motivators and strategize to increase visibility with shoppers.

Dive deeper into what's driving loyalty today.

Download our latest report at canadapost.ca/ShopperResearch.

Wish them many happy returns.

Not every purchase works out perfectly the first time. So don't let a rigid returns policy prevent your customers from trying again. With one-in-three shoppers demanding a hassle-free returns experience, that makes for an exciting opportunity to further distinguish your brand. By offering simple, affordable and convenient returns, you'll make sure shoppers get the experience (and items) they want – and keep them returning for more.

Discover our robust suite of returns solutions that help drive business efficiency and meet customer expectations. **Contact a Canada Post ecommerce expert at canadapost.ca/returns or call 1.866.747.3871.**

Investing in the future

Building a stronger, more sustainable Canada by delivering more for businesses

There is no going back now. The acceleration of ecommerce represents a permanent change in how Canadians shop, with sales expected to reach \$104.77 billion in Canada alone by 2025¹.

A big number that requires a big response.

Over the next five years, Canada Post will invest \$4 billion to support the long-term growth of Canadian businesses in order to better serve Canadians from coast to coast to coast. Our plan reflects the need to provide reliable service that our customers and their customers can count on. We are focused on expanding our network capacity, introducing operational innovations that respond to a changing ecommerce landscape, enhancing our solutions and building a more sustainable future – all with an eye toward a stronger Canada.

“A multi-year investment in our infrastructure, innovation and the environment will position Canada Post to meet the needs of Canadian businesses, consumers and communities across the country,” said Rod Hart, Chief Customer and Marketing Officer. “We see significant opportunities to build on our core capabilities, provide reliable service and support the long-term growth of Canadian ecommerce while enabling the success of retailers large and small.”



Some of the investments include:

Building a stronger network

The Albert Jackson Processing Centre in Scarborough, Ont., will be a key hub in our national network. When it officially opens in early 2023, the \$470-million state-of-the-art, net-zero parcel sorting facility will be able to process more than one million packages a day at full capacity and sort more than 60,000 packages per hour – 50 per cent more than our Gateway facility in Mississauga, Ont., currently our largest parcel plant.

The facility will also enable competitive delivery solutions, enabling your business to benefit from enhanced delivery standards.

The centre is also the largest industrial project in Canada with the Zero Carbon Building™ Standard designation. To further strengthen our entire network, we are also expanding our parcel processing capacity in a few major urban cities across the country, and enhancing our rural and delivery capacity to increase delivery flow to communities in rural Canada.

Reducing our environmental impact

With nearly 14,000 vehicles and Canada’s largest retail network of close to 6,000 post offices, Canada Post acknowledges our footprint is significant. That’s why we’ve earmarked \$1 billion to cut emissions and transform our fleet over the next two decades. The corporation will transform its fleet to non-emitting transportation, with commitments to reach a 50 per cent electric fleet by 2030 and 100 per cent by 2040.

With rising consumer demand for sustainable ecommerce choices, Canada Post is focused on developing solutions to help businesses measure and manage their carbon impacts, including the introduction of a greenhouse gas calculator for parcels delivery. This solution, targeted to launch in early 2023, will enable retailers and shoppers to better understand the impact of their ecommerce purchases and help them make more informed decisions on their delivery choices.

Creating customer-centric experiences

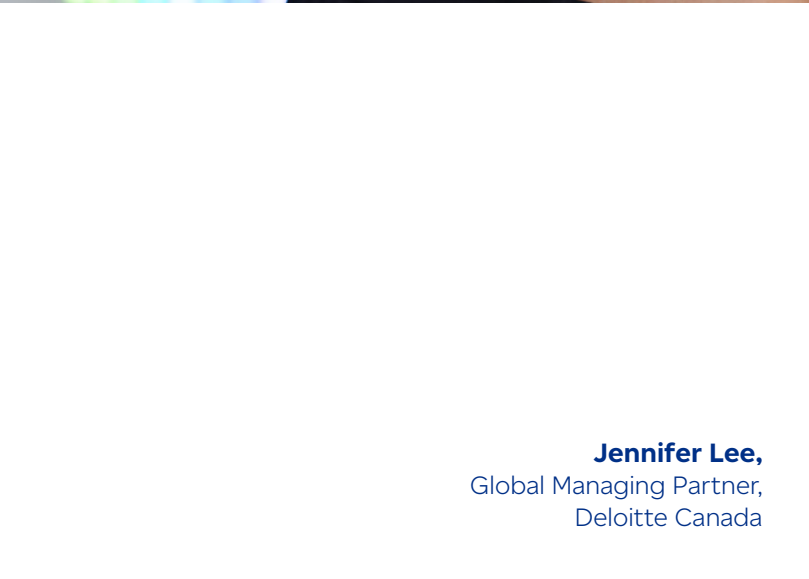
We know retailers have a relentless focus on improving their customer’s experience to meet changing expectations, updating every aspect of their business operations, from site navigation to checkout to fulfilment capabilities. For Canada Post, this means building solutions that will enable businesses to meet these expectations.

To better serve Canadians, we’re improving our service by introducing enhanced parcels visibility and streamlining the customer delivery experience. Technology enhancements in the next year will enable businesses and consumers to receive near-real-time shipment tracking visibility, delivered directly to their mobile device, in addition to digital solutions that will give them more control over how they receive their packages.

In these areas and beyond, Canada Post is delivering more with a plan to support the expected growth of ecommerce by making commitments to what matters most to Canadian businesses and Canadians. Find out more at canadapost.ca/DeliveringMore.



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The necessity of reinvention

Our experts weigh in on what it takes to adopt a reinvention mindset within your business

At the heart of reinvention is an understanding that you cannot always follow the same path if you want to keep pace with evolving consumers, ever-changing technology and even your competition. To thrive in today's disruptive market, you must adopt a reinvention mindset to maintain longevity and protect your bottom line. But how does a retailer do that? Our experts weigh in.

How does a business know when it's time to reinvent?

Walczak: First off, there needs to be a business case for it. I've never been a fan of "Let's just reinvent our brand every couple of years." That's actually a recipe for failure. But when necessary, you need to take a critical look at the changing dynamics in your marketplace. Are there shifting customer needs and preferences you're no longer meeting? If so, don't throw the baby out with the bathwater. First, look at your existing strengths. Where have you been successful? Where can you build from? What are also our shortcomings? Get really honest about yourself.

Doiron: Reinvention is often driven by changes in the market. But you must stay true to who you are as a brand and a business. Don't just follow the herd. Leverage insights to understand when you need to reinvent and potentially how to do it. Your customers are probably telling you, if you're listening, that it is time to transform.

Lee: When you go through the reinvention process, consider what strategic partnerships you need to have, and who needs to be part of your ecosystem. Small and medium-sized enterprises feel like only large companies can do this, but that's not the case. You have a lot more strategic agility; you don't have the legacy infrastructure; you have an ability to partner quickly, test it out and see if it's working. Small and medium-sized enterprises are missing an opportunity to think through who are their ecosystems and alliances as they build their brand.

Can you explain the concept of 'brand love' and its role in reinvention?

Walczak: In a very functional sense, brand love is about being the preferred choice people go back to, time and time again, regardless of price or other choice out there.

Keep in mind that brand love isn't for sale. You earn it. I'm a firm believer that the impression you make is actually far more important than the impressions you buy. Totally true. I'm not an anti-advertising person; I run an ad agency. But you don't build brand love just by hammering the marketplace with impressions and ads and messages. It's more important what you do and how you behave as a brand.

How do you quantify brand love? Well, brand love is about value creation. It's not just an ethereal concept. Some research has found that well-loved brands can command a price premium of more than 25%. We also know loved brands recover from economic crises a lot faster. That's incredibly important. You don't want to become irrelevant. Brand love is a security blanket.

What role does retail space play in reinvention?

Lee: In a post-pandemic world, how you create a consistent physical and digital experience is top of mind. You're spending all this money on ecommerce, on all this creative, but it doesn't reflect your in-store experience. So, the discussion is: How do you bring those two together to actually drive profitability?

Because of the pandemic, you suddenly have to take an enterprise view to customer experience – versus a channel view. That is challenging for a lot of businesses. They have to work with their partners to figure out: "How do I replicate that on-shelf experience that I may have on my digital channel?"

Also, look at how do you use data to create curated experiences so you don't treat everybody the same. Customers have given us their permission to use their data – so do it. Mine it. Analyze it. Use algorithms to deliver for them. That is a gap in the marketplace. Everyone's been talking about data analytics and AI forever; the challenge is no one's truly offering up the right curation of products and services with it.

These are highlights from the Reinvent: *Evolving your brand to drive business growth* panel. To view the discussion in full, visit canadapost.ca/Reinvention.



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– Shari Walczak, Co-Founder,
Chief Strategy Officer, The Garden North America

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